

# Draft National Development Plan

## Chapter 9 on Education

Draft, 11 November 2011

### Extracts from pages 20-26

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#### **Build a properly qualified, professional, competent and committed teaching, academic, research and public service cadre**

Three broad categories of action are needed to improve our education system. They all require unprecedented mobilisation and collaboration across society.

#### *Build a political consensus*

In the first instance, to build technical capacity in education requires a political consensus. There should be a national education pact, ideally mobilised by the President. Participants should include political parties, government, unions, the private sector, professional bodies including the South African Council for Educators and subject-specific associations, student organisations, associations of governing bodies and community groups.

The pact needs to be built on the idea that all parties stand to gain, but only if all parties are willing to make concessions, all parties need to be able to mobilise those they represent behind this principle.

Parties to the pact should commit themselves to work together to advance the goals of improving the quality of education in South Africa.

■ The goal of the pact should be to build a professional civil service for the school sphere in which:

- There are clear career paths for educators – two paths beyond the level of deputy principal: 1) Management, which starts with a principalship and proceeds to district institutional management and governance advisor, senior management in the district, provincial institutional management and governance advisor, senior manager in a provincial or national office. 2) Academic, which starts from school head of department, to deputy principal, to district curriculum advisor, senior curriculum management in the district, provincial curriculum advisor, and to senior curriculum manager in a provincial or national office.
- Expertise is recognised as the only criterion for appointing and promoting teachers and principals.
- The appointment and promotion of teachers and district officials are accepted as the responsibility of government. Unions' role should be in ensuring that proper processes are followed, not who gets appointed.

■ The following are achieved within five years:

- Competency standards for all educator jobs
- Competency assessments for entry into all educator jobs
- Training programmes for all educator jobs
- Organisational development and staff training in nine provincial offices, district offices, and poorly performing schools.

■ This pact has benefits for everyone. Teachers would benefit from:

- A clear system of career pathways, marked by competence standards.
- Leadership in provinces and districts able to help school principals manage schools more effectively, and to support classroom teachers in improving their teaching skills.
- All officials and teachers will receive continuous training.
- Principals and teachers in underperforming schools will receive training, mentoring and support.

*The concessions that teachers will have to make for this scheme include:*

- Entry into the profession and promotion will depend on passing competency tests.
- Principals and teachers in underperforming schools will receive training during the June vacation, and on-site mentoring and support for a full year.
- Training courses will be followed by competency tests.
- The results of these tests will lead to one of three outcomes: certified competent, identified as being in need of further development, or removed through formal procedures.
- All strikes must occur within the law. Criminal behaviour will be prosecuted, and teacher indiscipline will be punished. There will be no “political solutions” to incidents of lawlessness and indiscipline.

Government will have to commit to improving the management of the education sector, ensure policy stability, a better working environment (including security in schools) and ongoing support. Government will have to agree to respect teachers’ professional expertise and seek their opinion on educational matters, invests more in the support services teachers need such as libraries/classroom assistants in return for teachers attending training during vacation and the training being linked to assessments.

The pact restates elements of good education administration and includes proposals already under consideration by the Department of Basic Education. Once signed by all stakeholders, no aspect should be subject to further negotiation in the Education Labour Relations Council. Government should play a leading role in implementing the pact.

### *Technical mobilisation*

It is estimated that approximately 80 percent of our schools are underperforming. This translates to about 20 000 schools. International experience shows that system wide improvements in education systems can be implemented in a number of ways,

including putting together multi-disciplinary teams that assess the functionality of a school, develop a turnaround plan and oversee its implementation.

As a nation we need to mobilise our technical capacity to support the improvements in education along the following lines:

- Assemble a 5 000 - 6 000 member group of professionals with different areas of expertise and task them with assessing the levels of functionality in each school, develop a plan for addressing the weaknesses, and oversee the implementation of the turnaround plan for each school.
- Professionals from different government departments with appropriate expertise, national and provincial departments of education, education researchers / specialists, retired principals and teachers from better performing schools where this can be done without disrupting learning, will be part of the team.
- Each underperforming school will be assigned a team of three to five highly skilled professionals for a period of six months, and one mentor thereafter to work with the school management team to implement the turnaround plan over a three year period.
- The team of three to five per school will be made up of a mixture of skills sets ranging from financial managers, accountants, education specialists, management consultants, engineers, and academics. Members of the team will be drawn from public and private education institutions, management consulting firms, businesses, training providers, unions and professional bodies, non-profit organisations and faith-based groups. The mentors will either be retired principals, local business persons or specially recruited organisational development specialists.
- After the initial six months follow-up work overseen by the mentors will include infrastructure development, in-service training for teachers and principals, and implementation of new management systems.
- The group of professionals assembled needs to be large enough to cover all targeted schools within a period of five to six years. Each team will work with two schools in one year, meaning that, in total, up to 3 000 schools could be covered each year.
- For this initiative to work and be affordable, the different professional services firms across the disciplines, non-government organisations, training providers, professional bodies and other companies would need to agree to deploy their staff to work with government on this initiative free or at reduced rates of between 40 and 50 percent of their normal charge out rates in exchange for a commitment from government to provide work on this initiative for a period of six years.

- This initiative should be led by the national Department of Basic Education working with provincial departments of education. As far as possible officials of the national and provincial departments of education should be part of the schools teams.

Given the amount of work and the numbers of people involved, and to prevent corruption, this scheme cannot be managed by government negotiating with individual firms and professionals. Broad terms of the scheme will be negotiated with representative bodies of the different professions to make sure that design is broadly acceptable and firms would have to sign up to participate and be allocated to schools.

### *Consolidation of improvements*

The third category of actions is intended to consolidate and ensure sustainability of the improvements. These actions are long term in nature. They recognise that teachers and principals are central to the functioning of a school. These actions focus on improving the quality of teaching and school management.

### **Expand Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme**

Funza Lushaka is an important new strategy to attract learners into the teaching profession, especially those with good passes in maths, science and languages. It should be strengthened and expanded. In addition, measures are needed to ensure that Funza Lushaka graduates are immediately absorbed into schools.

### **Provide more support to professional bodies**

To enhance teachers' subject knowledge and their pride in the profession, greater support should be given to teacher associations that specialise in specific subjects, such as the Association for Mathematics Education of South Africa. The Eastern Cape has recently established an association of English teachers. Other countries have associations of computer science, science and English teachers.

These organisations could provide professional development opportunities, disseminate information about best practices and provide updates on cutting-edge research. South Africa would benefit immensely from having such organisations in key subject areas.

## **Change the pay structure to attract and retain good teachers**

Bursaries alone will not attract enough top-achieving candidates into teaching. The flat wage gradient in teaching deters highly skilled people from entering or staying in teaching.

The performance of teachers is only one of the things that impacts on the performance of learners. As a result, performance-based incentives often prove highly controversial.

However, it is possible to identify some indicators of improvements in teachers' performance that can be used to reward teachers for enhancing their skills. Remuneration and promotion systems should take such indicators of a teacher's level of expertise and commitment into account. Each year, there should be an opportunity for teachers to take an examination focused on the curriculum that they teach. Within each education band, there should be a test for every subject. Teachers taking part should write the test corresponding to the subject and highest band in which they teach. For foundation-phase teachers, a more generic test will be appropriate. For accurate budgeting, a fixed number of teachers should receive a financial bonus, paid out over about three years, so that teachers are tested regularly, but not too often. It should also be recognised that there are non-economic ways of rewarding good performance, ranging from public awards to exchange programmes and sabbaticals.

## **School management for instructional leadership**

A targeted approach will need to be taken to the application of the recommendations, as not every proposal will be appropriate for every school. Schools that are already performing well should not be expected to fulfil additional tasks that are designed to deliver improvements in poorly performing schools. Very low-performing schools should receive the closest attention. This principle is accepted by the Department of Basic Education. Visible indicators of the quality of school leadership should be monitored. For example, in schools where curriculum coverage is a problem, principals should report regularly on this issue.

## **Ensure that appropriately qualified and competent people become principals**

High-quality principals need to be attracted, trained and supported. Changes should be introduced to appointment processes for principals including administering a competency test for all candidates. Minimum qualifications for becoming principals should be introduced and recruitment processes should ensure that candidates

meet these criteria. Serving principals should be given a period of 10 years to acquire the qualifications, failing which they should face retrenchment or demotion.

Principals should gradually be given more powers to administer schools, including financial management, procurement of textbooks and other educational material, as well as hiring and firing educators. These delegations are necessary so that principals can be accountable for the performance of their schools. The commission supports the Department of Basic Education initiative to introduce performance contracts for principals. These contracts should be used as a means to help principals who strive for excellence to find ways to improve their performance year on year, including being used as a way of identifying training needs. However, if principals repeatedly fail to meet performance targets, monitoring information indicates poor performance, and investigations based on interviews with school stakeholders confirm that the principal is ineffective, then the principal should be replaced.

### **Clarify the role of districts and improve their capacity to support schools**

A clearer understanding of the functions of districts is required. Lack of capacity may limit what can reasonably be delegated to district offices. Since it takes time for professional capacity to be built up in districts, the focus should be on improving the availability of intervention tools that can be used by district officials and other bodies that support schools.

### **Promote constructive partnerships**

Teacher unions are crucial to improving the education system. Government should look at effective ways of working with unions to reach their members. Experience in other countries shows that without a critical level of professional expertise among union leaders, it is difficult to get unions to move beyond the issue of salary increments to the core professional concern of improving the quality of education. Sponsoring advanced studies for union leaders could form part of the constructive partnership.

### **Generate and draw support from civil society**

School governing bodies have a strong legislative mandate to fulfil the governance function of schools, including extensive responsibility in finances and setting internal school policies. Many governing bodies are significantly hampered by parents' lack of expertise and social status relative to school staff. Additional support should be given to governing bodies to enable them to fulfil their mandate

in promoting the effective management of schools. School governing bodies should attend compulsory courses once elected.

### **Externally administer and mark the annual national assessment in one primary school grade**

In a minimum of one primary school grade (perhaps grade 6), the annual national assessment should be externally administered and marked to ensure that there is at least one reliable system-wide measure of quality for all primary schools.

### **Present the annual national assessment results in an accessible format**

The assessment results should be made accessible to parents and the community in a way that makes the data easy to interpret.

### **Ensure high-quality language instruction in the foundation phase**

High-quality teaching of students' first language and English is vital during the foundation phase. Effective support materials need to be available for teachers and learners during the transition to English as the language of learning and teaching. The Department of Basic Education should participate in the international market for skills, including recruiting teachers from other English-speaking countries.

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Chapter 9 of the draft SA National Development Plan, "Improving Education, Training and Innovation" (34 pages, 300 KB PDF) is at:

<http://www.npconline.co.za/MediaLib/Downloads/Home/Tabs/New/Chapter%2009%20-%20Improving%20education,%20training%20and%20innovation.pdf>

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**Course: Development, Rural and Urban**

**13093, National Plan, C10, Education – extract**

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